

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
Awarded Project Descriptions
FY 2013 and FY2014 Grant Round

FARMLANDS AND FOREST PRESERVATION CATEGORY

Fauquier County Purchase of Development Rights Program – Messick Farm PDR Project

The grant request was for the purchase of a conservation easement on 408.3 acres in Fauquier County on the O.B. Messick and Sons dairy farm in Remington. Crops are grown on a portion of the property while the remainder is used for pasture for the dairy cows. More than 85 percent of the property is either prime farmland or statewide important soils. The Messick Farm borders eight properties under easements, seven of which are under the Fauquier County PDR Program. In protecting the Messick Farm, a total of 1,605 contiguous acres will be protected through conservation easements. In addition, the farm property borders approximately ½ mile of the Rappahannock River on the west side, and fencing has been constructed along the entire length to preserve the integrity of the river.

Total Project Cost: \$709,000. Match: Fauquier County PDR program/VDACS Farmland Preservation Fund \$609,000. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$100,000. **Grant award:** \$100,000.

Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority – Moore & Dorsey – Dorsey Orchard Tract

The grant request was for the purchase of a conservation easement on 68 acres in Clarke County. Moore and Dorsey have owned the farm for more than 50 years. This farm and an additional 800 acres owned by Moore and Dorsey was a viable apple orchard until recently when this farm was converted to cropland due to a downturn in the apple industry. This property contains a total of 100 percent prime, statewide and locally important soils, and is located in the Long Marsh Rural Historic District. The farm also has implemented numerous Best Management Practices (BMP) including conservation crop rotation, high residue no-till, and nutrient management. In addition, Mr. Dorsey will begin implementing a wildlife habitat plan on the farm next year, installing native warm season grasses, wildflowers and shrubs on portions of the farm.

Total Project Cost: \$330,500. Match: NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection program \$162,500; landowner donation \$81,250; Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority/Virginia Farmland Preservation Fund \$25,500. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$61,250. **Grant award:** \$61,250.

Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) – Sundance LLC

The grant request was to help fund the purchase of a conservation easement on 206 acres of forestland in Rockingham County. Nearly the entire property is covered in working forests, all of which is classified as having high forest conservation value by the VDOF. The property contains approximately 5,600 feet of the upper reaches of Little Dry River (a primary tributary to the North Fork Shenandoah River) and approximately 4,100 linear feet of the upper reaches of Sugar Run (a principal tributary of Little Dry River), contributing to the potable water sources for the downstream communities of Broadway, Timberville, and New Market. Sixteen natural heritage resources have been identified within two miles of the property, including potential endangered wood turtle habitat along the Little Dry River on the property. The property contributes to a large expanse of unbroken forestland in the area, bounded by the George

Washington National Forest on three sides, and within one mile of the 1,100-acre Feedstone Hunt Club land protected by a VDOF open-space easement, a 2008 VLCF project.

Total Project Cost: \$642,000. Match: bargain sale from the landowner. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$310,000. **Grant award:** \$151,750.

Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) – BLD Farms Rose Hill

The grant request was for the partial purchase of a conservation easement on 250 acres of forestland approximately one-half mile west of Drewryville in Southhampton County. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the property is covered in working forestland, almost half of which is classified as having high forest conservation value by the VDOF. The property includes approximately 3,500 feet of Three Creek and 1,700 feet of Nicholson Creek, tributaries of the Nottoway River, maintaining water quality for downstream communities that use the river as a potable water source. The property is known to contain two natural heritage resources as confirmed by Natural Heritage Division (DCR-NH) ecologists, and is part of an area designated by DCR-NH as the Three Creek Stream Conservation Unit.

Total Project Cost: \$345,642. Match: bargain sale from the landowner. **Grant award:** \$62,000.

HISTORIC RESOURCES CATEGORY

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority – Jackson House at Ball’s Bluff

Funding was requested for a 3.22-acre parcel of land located within the core area of the Ball’s Bluff Battlefield. The Civil War Sites Advisory Commission has given this battle a preservation priority rating of III.2 Class B. Acquisition and permanent protection of the parcel will protect the Jackson House, a key landmark around which the initial fighting and skirmishing of the battle took place. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority intends to incorporate the parcel into the existing Ball’s Bluff Regional Park, provide full public access to the property, and adapt the existing Jackson House residence for use as a visitor and interpretative center. The parcel is adjacent to two existing parks, located in the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, and will link federal, regional, and local park lands.

Total Project Cost: \$500,000 **Match:** \$325,000 (\$325,000-Civil War Trust in purchase funds; property will be donated to Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority) **VLCF Grant Request:** \$175,000 **Grant award:** \$175,000 (\$50,000 from Historic Resources, \$125,000 from Parks and Open Space).

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation – Prillaman Farm/Gabriel Jones Farm

Funding is requested for acquisition of an easement over the 92-acre Prillaman/Gabriel Jones Farm. The property is located within the core and study areas of the Port Republic Battlefield. The Civil War Sites Advisory Commission has given this battlefield a preservation priority rating of II.2, Class B. The property is adjacent to the historic Bogota Farm, under easement with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and includes the house site of the original settler of the property Gabriel Jones. This project will also conserve prime farmland, 800-feet of frontage on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, 13 archaeological sites, and contribute to the 2,162-acre block of preserved battlefield farm and forest land in the viewshed of the Shenandoah National Park and the Skyline Drives.

Total Project Cost: \$323,613 **Match:** \$218,936 (\$150,000-American Battlefield Protection Program grant; \$68,936-Virginia Civil War Sites Preservation Fund grant) **Grant award:** \$75,000.

Clarke County Easement Authority – Chapman Farm

Funding is requested for purchase of an easement over a 140-acre farm located within the core area of the Cool Springs Battlefield in Clarke County. The Civil War Sites Advisory Commission has given this battlefield a preservation priority rating of II.3, Class C. A portion of the Chapman Farm is also located within the boundaries of the Cool Springs Battlefield Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Permanent protection of the Chapman Farm will augment efforts by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to place easements on other large portions of the Cool Springs Battlefield, including the 195-acre Textron Tract and the 965-acre Holy Cross Abbey Tract. This project will also conserve prime farmland, forested cover of high conservation value, and one-half mile of frontage on the Shenandoah River.

Total Project Cost: \$500,000 **Match:** \$400,000 (Clarke County-\$75,000; Land/Real Property Donation by Landowner-\$125,000; VDACS-\$75,000; Piedmont Environmental Council-\$125,000). **VLCF Grant Request:** \$100,000. **Grant award:** \$75,000.

Civil War Trust – Crew House at Malvern Hill

Funding is requested for fee simple acquisition of a 1-acre property located within the core area of the Malvern Hill Battlefield in Henrico County. The Civil War Sites Advisory Commission has given this battlefield its highest preservation priority rating of I.1, Class A. The Battle of Malvern Hill, which took place on July 1, 1862, was the last battle of the Seven Days' Campaign. Acquisition and permanent preservation of the property through an easement will protect the Crew House, a key feature of the 1862 battle. The Crew House stood at the point of the Union line where Confederates directed their attacks later in the day. Brig. Gen. George Morrell, commanding the division that was the target of these attacks, made his headquarters in the Crew House. The property is directly adjacent to the Richmond National Battlefield Park and lands protected by the Civil War Trust. In partnership with the National Park Service and Henrico County, the Civil War Trust intends to provide full public access to the property and adapt the existing dwelling for use as a visitor and interpretative center.

Total Project Cost: \$344,470 **Match:** \$174,470 (Civil War Trust cash and additional grant funding not yet committed). **VLCF Grant Request:** \$170,000 **Grant award:** \$122,129.

NATURAL AREAS CATEGORY

Virginia Outdoors Foundation – Smooth Coneflower Habitat, Milton Part Two

Funding is requested by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) for the VOF and the Department of Conservation and Recreation to purchase an open-space easement and natural area preserve dedication on 165 acres of privately owned land in Montgomery County. This project is the second phase of a two phase project to protect rare species and significant natural communities in the Pedlar Hills region of Montgomery County. Like the first phase of this project, the easement will be written to protect habitat for several rare plant species, including the federally threatened smooth coneflower, and the significant Ridge and Valley dolomite woodland natural community that are known to occur on the property. The subject property

adjoins a 257-acre tract (Milton Part One) that was protected through an open-space easement and deed of natural area preserve dedication recorded in October of 2012. The expanded acreage of protected land resulting from the second phase of this project will increase the likelihood of conservation success for the conservation targets found here. A portion of the fair market value of the easement on Phase Two, estimated to be about \$54,000, will be donated to VOF and DCR by the owner of this property. This project will protect open space values of Montgomery County as the forested hillsides on the property, viewed daily by the thousands of travelers on the I-81 corridor adjacent to this property, will remain forever in a forested condition.

Total Project Cost: \$223,355 **Match:** As the applicant is a state agency, no match is required. However the landowner is willing to contribute a \$54,105 in-kind donation, a portion of the value of the easement, to reduce VOF's cost for this project. **Grant award:** \$169,250.

The Nature Conservancy – South Quay Natural Area Preserve Project, Phase II

In 2009, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) protected 420 acres of forestland in their South Quay – Phase I project funded by a grant from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. The second phase of TNC's South Quay conservation effort now proposed is the fee-simple purchase of a 94-acre tract (the Bear Deal LLC tract) located as an inholding in a 2,900-acre tract which will soon be purchased by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. This tract supports a total of eight state rare plant species including 70 acres of Virginia native longleaf pine seedlings planted in 2012. Protection of the Bear Deal tract is an important component in the larger strategy to protect the South Quay conservation site and to restore native longleaf pine sandhill natural communities in Virginia. Purchase and management of this tract will eliminate the threat of future incompatible land use such as sand mining or development, which would greatly hamper the larger restoration effort. Restriction of land development and forest management will ensure continued water quality protection for aquatic conservation targets, particularly the lower Nottoway's rich freshwater mussel fauna.

From a landscape perspective, this project will contribute to the TNC, DCR, DOF and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries efforts to place over 4,500 acres of land in the South Quay conservation site under permanent protection. Combined with over 16,000 acres of adjacent land along the Chowan River in North Carolina, the complex of conservation lands centered on South Quay represents the largest block of protected forest land in the northern range of the longleaf pine ecosystem.

Total Project Cost: \$310,000 **Match:** \$155,000 in Forest Legacy funding obtained by The Nature Conservancy. **Grant award:** \$155,000.

The Nature Conservancy – Clinch River: Cleveland to Artrip Conservation Area

Funding is requested for the fee-simple purchase of land along the Clinch River in Russell County. This project will protect close to 1.8 miles of river frontage along the Clinch River, within the "Clinch River – Little River Stream Conservation Unit," which has been designated as having outstanding biological significance by DCR's Division of Natural Heritage. In order to provide a protected corridor for the important terrestrial and freshwater conservation targets found in this significant stretch of the Clinch River, an effort has been underway since 1990 to connect the state natural areas and Nature Conservancy preserves from the town of Cleveland to the Big Cedar Creek and beyond. Until recently, the rural nature of this area has provided some protection to many of the rare elements. However, that protection will be tested in the decades to come as the public continues to move into the special places of southwest Virginia. The subject properties the Conservancy intends to purchase are, or once were, part of

working farms. Only a small portion of these properties remains in pasture and agricultural fields. On the north side of the river the forested slopes are generally rough with steep bluffs, numerous limestone outcrops, and a flat, narrow terrace adjacent to the river bank. DCR biologists believe that these forested areas are likely to contain very rich and diverse flowering plant communities. Once acquired, these properties will be owned by The Nature Conservancy. Properties purchased with VLCF funding will be further protected through an open space easement and deed of natural area preserve dedication.

Total Project Cost: \$320,000 **Match:** \$200,000 (Cash from The Nature Conservancy)
Grant award: \$120,000.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE CATEGORY

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust – Belmont Bay Farm Phase I

This project will protect a 115-acre forested parcel, located on Mason Neck in southeast Fairfax County. The property is part of the last remaining 400-acre expanse of forest and farmland under private ownership on Mason Neck, and one of only two unprotected properties of this size remaining in Fairfax County. Surrounded by over 6,500 acres of publicly owned open space and private conservation easements, the project provides a critical wildlife corridor, including habitat for bald eagle and numerous migratory birds, protects several streams that feed Belmont Bay and the Potomac River, and provides a scenic view from Mason Neck State Park, located directly across Belmont Bay. NVCT will phase the protection of Belmont Bay Farm over the next several years, and intends to secure public access to Belmont Bay and public trails across the farm.

Total Project Cost: \$1,829,600. **Match:** NVCT funds and landowner donation. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$540,000. **Grant award:** \$250,000 from Parks & Open Space Category.